

JAPAN CHRISTIAN ACTIVITY NEWS

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CHRISTIAN PROTESTS CONTINUE OVER NATIONAL HOLIDAY ISSUE

Japanese Christians are continuing their protest against proposals to designate February 11--"Kigensetsu"--as Japan's National Founders Day.

Latest in a series of Christian moves against the parliamentary drive for choice of the February date was a march on the Diet Building on September 15 by a group of pastors and laymen. The picketers gathered before their march at the Yamate Congregation of the United Church of Christ in Japan.

The Christian activists fear that designation of February 11--anniversary of the mythical founding of Japan's Imperial Line--will make the National holiday a focal point around which latent elements of Japan's old imperial tradition will gather.

KYODAN SILVER ANNIVERSARY SET FOR OCTOBER 21 - 26

The United Church of Christ in Japan (Kyodan) will celebrate the silver anniversary of its founding at a General Assembly in Osaka on October 21-26. D.T. Niles, General Secretary of the East Asia Christian Council, will address the delegates.

The Kyodan was formed in 1941 as a union of many diverse denominations and theological traditions. Though the Japanese Government's wartime unity effort provided immediate stimulus to organization of the United Church, the establishment of the new body had been preceded by years of discussion on the subject of church union by Japanese Christians. Several groups withdrew from the Kyodan in the new freedom following the war, but the church remains the majority body of Japanese Protestantism.

Site of the anniversary meeting will be Osaka Jo Gakuin, a girl's school originally founded (1884) by Cumberland Presbyterian missionaries.

ROMAN CATHOLICS RELEASE STATISTICS FOR JAPAN

Roman Catholic authorities have released statistics for Roman Catholic membership in this country as of June 1966. Membership is reported at a new high of 333,169 persons, a figure amounting to 0.3 per cent of the national population and about 100,000 less than the Protestant figures.

Japanese Roman Catholics worship in 962 churches, and are led by a clergy numbering 1900 priests (630 Japanese; 1,270 foreigners).

JAPAN YWCA HITS DEFEATISM ON VIETNAM PEACE ISSUE; CALLS FOR LETTER-WRITING CAMPAIGN

Japan's YWCA has asked its members to write letters to American friends in which the Japanese desire for reconciliation in Vietnam is made clear.

In urging the letter campaign, the Y's Social Affairs Commission lashed at a general air of defeatism among the ranks of Japanese Christian peace workers. "Aren't we taking it for granted that the fighting will continue?", asked the Commission. "Are we not unconsciously thinking that we can do nothing?"

YWCA officials have preciously addressed communications on the Vietnam issue to President Johnson and to leaders of the American "Y".

NEW ASSOCIATE GENERAL SECRETARY OF NATIONAL CHRISTIAN COUNCIL OF JAPAN APPOINTED

The Rev. Stanley Manierre has succeeded Dr. Gordon K. Chapman as Associate General Secretary of the Japan National Christian Council. Secretary Chapman resigned his post because of illness.

Mr. Manierre, a missionary of the American Baptist Foreign Mission Society, began his relationship with Japan and the Japanese Church during an 8-month interval in a prisoner-of-war camp during World War II. Following his release he returned to the United States, but a chance remark made by an interpreter in the camp--"Love Your Enemy"--led him back to Japan in 1954 for evangelistic work in Osaka and Nagoya.

The new Associate General Secretary is a graduate of the Andover Newton Theological School, near Boston Massachusetts. He was officially presented to the NCC staff and other Christian colleagues at a meeting of the NCC Executive Committee on Sept. 12.

TOKYO WELCOMES BACK DR. LAWRENCE LACOUR

Dr. and Mrs. Lawrence Lacour, leaders of Japan's most successful series of postwar evangelistic campaigns, were welcomed back to Tokyo on September 10. Members of this capital's Protestant community honored the veteran campaigner at a reception held in the downtown Christian Center on September 12.

The first Lacour Musical Evangelistic Team toured Japan in 1950. The group feature harp and marimba music, and vigorous preaching in many small cities and towns. Thereafter Dr. and Mrs. Lacour returned to Nippon every year between 1954 and 1959. The program they began--now enlarged to include corps of North American ministers who join force with Japanese clergymen for six weeks of intensive visitation every year--remains a major feature of the Kyodan's evangelistic effort.

Dr. and Mrs. Lacour will remain in Japan until September 26.